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PRIORITY TEL AVIV

TO

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

TELEGRAM NUMBER 640

07 JULY 1970

RECEIVED IN REGISTRY No. 10 - 9 JUL 1970 NER 10/23
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ADDRESSED TO F C O TELEGRAM NUMBER 640 OF 7 JULY 1970,

REPEATED FOR INFORMATION TO AMMAN, BEIRUT, CAIRO, MOSCOW.

WASHINGTON, PARIS, UKMIS NEW YORK.

NER 22/2 f(66)

MY IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING TELEGRAM.

DATE	
TIME	
BY	
FOR	

IT IS OBVIOUS FROM ALL OUR CONVERSATIONS THAT THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF APPREHENSION HERE AT THE LATEST SOVIET MOVES. INDEED SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT THEY HAVE NEVER KNOWN INFORMED ISRAELI OPINION SO WORRIED. OTHERS, WHILE ADMITTING THAT THE SITUATION IS ALARMING, POINT OUT THAT ISRAEL HAS BEEN THROUGH A SIMILAR WAR OF NERVES SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE.

2. IN THE ATTEMPT TO ANALYSE SOVIET MOTIVES, APART FROM THE THEORY, WHICH MR. EBAN MENTIONED TO ME, THAT THE RUSSIANS MAY BE

/TRYING
CONFIDENTIAL

DA
From
9/7

TRYING TO FREE THE SUEZ CANAL AND PUSH THE ISRAELIS OFF ITS EASTERN BANK, THERE SEEM TO BE THREE MAIN EXPLANATIONS ADVANCED FOR THE LATEST SOVIET MOVES :

- (A) THIS MAY BE ONE OF A SERIES OF RUSSIAN ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH POSITIONS OF STRENGTH AROUND THE WORLD BEFORE MAKING A REAL EFFORT FOR DETENTE WITH THE UNITED STATES, AT A TIME WHEN THE AMERICANS ARE ALSO TRYING TO ESTABLISH SIMILAR POSITIONS OF STRENGTH.
- (B) ALTERNATIVELY, THE RUSSIANS MAY GENUINELY HAVE IT IN MIND TO PURSUE THE SEARCH FOR A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT BUT WANT TO SET THE SCENE FOR THIS AS FAVOURABLY AS POSSIBLE BY FIRST STRENGTHENING THEIR POSITION ON THE GROUND.
- (C) ON THE OTHER HAND THEY MAY THINK THAT THEY HAVE TO RESPOND TO EGYPTIAN PRESSURE AND GIVE PRESIDENT NASSER A MILITARY VICTORY IN THE CANAL AREA.

3. I HAVE BEEN TOLD ON GOOD AUTHORITY THAT THE PREVAILING VIEW IN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES IS THAT (C) IS THE MOST LIKELY ANSWER. THIS IS OF COURSE THE MOST DANGEROUS PROSPECT PARTICULARLY BECAUSE IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW FAR THE RUSSIANS CAN BE EXPECTED TO GO. WILL THEY,

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TEL AVIV TELEGRAM NO.640 TO FGD.

-3-

FOR EXAMPLE, STOP AT REMOVING ISRAELI AIR SUPREMACY IN THE CANAL ZONE ? IF SO, WILL THIS, AS SEEMS TO BE THE PREVAILING MILITARY OPINION HERE, MAKE THE ISRAELI POSITION ON THE CANAL ITSELF UNDER THE FIRE OF THE EGYPTIAN GUNS UNTENABLE ? IN THAT CASE, WILL THE RUSSIANS UNLEASH AN EGYPTIAN OFFENSIVE ACROSS THE CANAL AND INTO SINAI ?

4. IN THIS SITUATION, THE ISRAELIS ARE NOT COMMITTING THEMSELVES AS TO WHAT THEY THEMSELVES WILL DO IN THE MILITARY FIELD, ALTHOUGH THEY CONTINUE TO SAY THAT THEY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DEFEND THE CANAL ZONE.

BUT IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THEY ARE PINNING GREAT HOPES ON THE

AMERICANS AND, AT LEAST ON THE SURFACE, TAKING COMFORT FROM PRESIDENT NIXON'S REMARKS LAST WEEK.

RAFAEL TOLD ME ON SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE

U.S. EMBASSY THAT UP TO THE TIME OF PRESIDENT NIXON'S PRESS CONFERENCE PEOPLE HERE HAD BEEN VERY WORRIED AND THE PRIME MINISTER CONFIRMED TO ME LATER THAT SHE HAD BEEN HAVING A WORRYING TIME BUT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS WERE ENCOURAGING.

5. AS YOU WILL HAVE SEEN FROM MY IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING TELEGRAM, MR. EBAN IS PUTTING THE BEST CONSTRUCTION HE CAN ON THE PRESIDENT'S

/REMARKS

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REMARKS AS A DELIBERATE RESPONSE TO SOVIET MOVES, AND THIS IS TR
OF OFFICIALS WITH WHOM I HAVE ALSO SPOKEN. THEY POINT OUT, FOR
EXAMPLE, THAT THERE HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY NO OPPOSITION IN THE UNITED
STATES TO PRESIDENT NIXON'S IMPLIED NEW COMMITMENT, WHETHER FROM
THE YOUNG, THE EXTREME LEFT, THE ACADEMICS OR THE SENATE (ALTHOUGH
I SEE THAT SENATOR FULBRIGHT IS NOW REPORTED AS SAYING THAT VIET
NAM IS STILL THE FIRST PRIORITY).

6. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE THE BRAVE TALK, I THINK THERE IS A GENERAL
REALISATION THAT SO FAR AT ANY RATE THE AMERICANS HAVE ONLY REACHED
THE STAGE OF TRYING TO DETER THE RUSSIANS BY DIPLOMATIC MEANS AND
THAT IF THE DETERRENT DOES NOT WORK THE CONSEQUENCES COULD BE
EXTREMELY SERIOUS. THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY THEY LOOK TO OTHER
FRIENDLY WESTERN POWERS TO REINFORCE THE DETERRENT.

FCO PASS TO WASHINGTON, PARIS, UKMIS NEW YORK.

MR. BARNES

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

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TEL AVIV

TO FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

TELEGRAM NO 685

31 JULY 1970

SECRET

U.K. EYES ONLY

RECEIVED IN REGISTRY No. 10 1970 NER 10/33

ADDRESSED TO FCO TELEGRAM NO 685 OF 31 JULY 1970 REPEATED FOR INFORMATION TO MODUK DI4, JISNE, CAIRO, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW.

SOVIET-MANNED AIRCRAFT.

PA.
A. 3/8

FOLLOWING THE DAILY EXPRESS STORY LAST WEDNESDAY ABOUT A CLASH BETWEEN SOVIET-MANNED FIGHTERS AND TWO ISRAELI SKY-HAWKS OVER THE CANAL, THE ISRAEL AUTHORITIES DENIED THAT ANY OF THEIR AIRCRAFT HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN. WHEN I ASKED AVNER ABOUT THIS YESTERDAY HE SAID THAT HE DOUBTED IF ANYONE ON THE ISRAELI SIDE KNEW FOR CERTAIN WHETHER THESE PILOTS WERE RUSSIAN.

2. D.A. HAS HOWEVER BEEN TOLD BY THE CHIEF INTELLIGENCE OFFICER OF THE ISRAEL AIR FORCE THAT THE FOUR MIG21S SHOT DOWN YESTERDAY (DA'S TELEGRAM NO FOH 310835Z JULY SAVING) WERE CERTAINLY SOVIET-MANNED. TWO MIRAGE PHOTOGRAPHIC RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT, ESCORTED BY TWO INTERCEPTOR MIRAGES, WERE FLYING SOUTH TO NORTH OVER THE WESTERN COAST OF THE GULF OF SUEZ, WHEN THEY WERE ATTACKED BY FOUR MIG 21S. THE MIGS APPEARED SUDDENLY FROM BELOW, GIVING THE ISRAELI CONTROLLERS NO TIME TO RECALL THEIR AIRCRAFT EASTWARDS BEFORE A DOGFIGHT DEVELOPED. TWO ISRAELI PHANTOMS, WHICH HAD BEEN ATTACKING A RADAR SITE NEARBY, CAME IN TO ASSIST AFTER FOUR OTHER MIGS JOINED THE BATTLE. OF THE TOTAL OF EIGHT MIGS INVOLVED, FOUR WERE SHOT DOWN. SHORTLY AFTERWARDS ANOTHER TWELVE MIGS APPEARED ON THE SCENE, BUT TOO LATE TO ENGAGE THE ISRAELI AIRCRAFT.

SECRET

/3.

3. ASKED WHY HE WAS SO SURE THAT THE MIGS WERE RUSSIAN-MANNED, THE CHIEF INTELLIGENCE OFFICER SAID THAT THEY HAD POSITIVE VOICE IDENTIFICATION OF ALL EIGHT MIGS INVOLVED IN THE DOG-FIGHT AND BELIEVED THAT THE OTHER TWELVE WERE ALSO RUSSIAN. MOREOVER, THE EIGHT MIGS ENGAGED HAD ACTED IN A MUCH MORE AGGRESSIVE WAY THAN EGYPTIAN PILOTS, EVEN THOUGH IN THEIR BATTLE TACTICS THEY APPEARED TO BE NO MORE SKILLFUL THAN THE EGYPTIANS.

4. D.A. WAS TOLD THAT THE ISRAELIS DO NOT INTEND TO REVEAL THEIR INFORMATION ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF THE MIG PILOTS, BUT THE AFTERNOON PRESS HERE HAS ALREADY REPORTED THAT FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS ARE ASSUMING THAT THE PILOTS WERE RUSSIAN.

5. IN RETROSPECT THE SIGNS OF AN AIR FORCE ALERT, INCLUDING A SOUTHWARD MOVE OF AIRCRAFT FROM RAMAT DAVID (EAST OF HAIFA), WHICH I MENTIONED IN MY TELEGRAM NO 678, MAY HAVE BEEN IN RESPONSE TO LAST SATURDAY'S INCIDENT WHEN SUSPECTED RUSSIAN PILOTS WERE THOUGHT TO HAVE CHASED TWO SKYHAWKS EAST OF THE CANAL INTO SINAI.

FCO PLEASE PASS FLASH TO DEFENCE COMCEN AND IMMEDIATE TO WASHINGTON.

DEFENCE COMCEN PLEASE PASS FLASH TO MODUK DI4 AND IMMEDIATE TO JISNE.

MR. FOSTER.

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

[SENT TO D.C.C.]

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Maariv Tel Aviv from finklestone London For Zak Denis Healey one

The extent of Russian involvement in the Middle East conflict would depend in some degree on Israeli actions.

This was one of the stark warnings given by Britain's redoubtable Defence Secretary, Mr Denis Healey, in an exclusive interview with me for Maariv.

In this frank and revealing interview which lasted for over an hour during his busy day at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall, ^{MR. HEALEY} also clarified British defence thinking about the presence of the Russians in the Middle East and their great vulnerability in time of conflict with the Western Powers. [He also made a vital statement about Israel's security.]

Denis Healey is a unique figure in British politics today. He has been the Defence Secretary for over five years and is ~~an~~ acknowledged master of his intricate post. There has never been a Labour Defence Secretary who knew so much more than his critics. Conservatives in the past often ~~emerged~~ ^{more} victors in their clashes with Labour Defence Ministers because they had so much ^{more} experience of the subject than he. The opposite is the case with Denis Healey. In Parliament he brushes aside his critics in matters of detail. He is known for his phenomenal memory. Probably for this reason his critics in Parliament are particularly bitter as they feel both frustrated and outmanoeuvred.

This does not mean of course that all the policies he defends and expounds are infallibly right. In many British hearts [even within his own Defence Ministry] there are pangs of regret at the decision to withdraw from East of Suez and from the Persian Gulf. Even Prime Minister Harold Wilson was one of the very last to be reluctantly persuaded that a British withdrawal from East of Suez was a right policy to follow in view of Communist encroachments. Perhaps now the doubts are being redoubled but no man can defend this policy with more conviction.

As an MP for a ^{London} constituency, Denis Healey has ~~many~~ numerous Jewish constituents, nearly of them passionately devoted to the cause of Israel. But this has not affected his thinking about Israel and the Middle East. In fact there were times when he was included among those Labour Ministers who were somewhat neutral on the question of Arabs and Israelis. Since then he is believed to have warmed to the Israeli cause and was in favour, ~~as~~ so it is said, of selling the Chieftain tanks to Israel. But if so this was not a matter of sentiment but of hard thinking and careful weighing of the principles and needs involved.

With his bushy eyebrows this ~~thick~~ tough Minister looks much younger even than his 52 years. He is a massive figure and one can imagine ^{him} in the ring laying flat his opponents. In fact during our conversations he playfully took up an ^{offensive} posture in pure ~~fight~~ pugilistic fashion and I almost expect ^{ed} a straight left from him any second.

More

Maariv Tel Aviv from finklestone London for Zak Denis Healey

With a twinkling sparkle in his eye he warned me before we started the interview in the presence of two of his officials, who carefully recorded the conversation, that he could not refer to the Cheftina issue. Later he also refused to make any comments on other points but the answers which he did give provided a fascinating picture of his thinking [and of the attitude of the British defence chiefs.] What, I asked him, was the British Government's military assessment of the present role of the Russians in the Middle East?

Quote I think that the increased Russian naval activity in the Mediterranean has both political and military objectives, ~~xxx~~ of which the political are more important at the moment. I think the Russians are now learning to use a navy in order to demonstrate a visible interest in the area so that to encourage their friends and discourage their enemies. Britain has used her navy in this way for two centuries.

On the military side the presence of the Soviet forces in the Mediterranean does make a marginal complication for the naval operations of the Western fleet but I agree very much with what Admiral Maurer, head of the American Navy ^{Sail!} that the Soviet fleet would be extremely vulnerable in an actual war situation, not only physically outnumbered by the fleets of Nato countries but also would have no air cover at all. ~~Whereas~~ Whereas the Western Powers have the very powerful American carriers in the Sixth Fleet and the occasional presence also of British carriers and also hundreds of ~~xxxxxxx~~ reconnaissance and fighter aircraft unquote Mr Healey refused to give the British estimate of the number of Russians ~~in~~ inside Egypt — + I have an idea but I do not think I can say + Asked what he thought their role was in Egypt, Mr Healey remarked :

Quote I think that they have two sets of roles. The first is to train Egyptians service personnel in the use of Soviet equipment. Secondly, to make use of ~~xxx~~ Egyptian facilities to carry out surveillance of the Nato fleet in the Western Mediterranean, and thirdly ~~xxx~~ they have recently sent in Sam 3 missiles and probably some personnel to operate them until the Egyptians are capable of operating them unquote

Quote Can you see the Russians becoming involved in the Middle East in the same ~~xxxx~~ way as the Americans have become involved in Vietnam and now in Cambodia? unquote I asked.

Healey replied immediately : Quote I should think it very unlikely that that ~~xxxx~~ should happen because I think the Russians are very unwilling to risk a direct involvement in a military conflict in the Middle East, most of all ^{if it} ~~that~~ was likely to lead to a military conflict with the United States and with Nato Powers. Since the Cuban crisis the Russians have learned of the dangers of exposing themselves militarily in an area where they have not got direct access. I think a great deal would depend on the ^{our} judgment of likely Israeli activities unquote

I reminded Mr Healey that Mr Eban had said that the extent of Soviet involvement ~~and~~ in the Middle East conflict would depend on the reactions of the Western Powers, ~~particularly~~ particularly the United States to the news that Russian pilots were flying operational

(3)

2) [It is possible to help determine the level of the Russian involvement! unquote
unquote]

MxxVx Britain's Defence Secretary refused to explain and elucidate further what he had in mind but I think this answer is a reflection of the unhappiness felt in Whitehall at the deep Israeli raids into Egypt. There is an appreciation of the need of the Israelis to attack the heavy guns and army concentrations near the Suez Canal but it is felt that the attacks deeperxx inside Egypt, including the environs of Cairo are too ^{provocative} ~~proximate~~ to the Russians.

It is believed that this point of view has been expressed to the Israeli Government by the British Government. [The British Government have apparently pleaded with Israeli Ministers to stop the deep raids and are not happy that this plea has not so far been accepted.]

I asked Mr Henley whether the Russians were supplying the Egyptians with new kinds of arms about which nothing has far been said publicly. He replied that he was not aware of such supply - not even the heavy T-62 tank. He recalled with a smile a story in a British paper that the Israelis had captured such a tank and had handed it over to the British. He made it clear there was no truth in the story.

Quote I think the Russians are anxious not to escalate the conflict in the Middle East unquote said Mr Healey. When I questioned him about the Israeli announcement of Russian pilots flying operational sorties, Mr Healey replied that it was still not clear what the Israelis had in mind. It was known the Russians were flying training missions. They also carried out observation flights. The British, he made clear, were still trying to find out what the real position was. At the moment it seemed as if there had not been any new departure by the Russians.

Had the increased Russian penetration into the Middle East not changed the position in regard to British policy to withdraw from the Persian Gulf and was it ~~was~~ not a mistake to keep to such a policy? I asked Mr Healey.

The Defence Secretary dismissed this argument summarily. 'Quote No. I think no. The British military policy had become contra-productive and there is no evidence that the Communist movements have grown faster since we decided to leave the Gulf unquote

Was it possible, I asked him next, that the Soviet penetration into the Middle East had some connection with the Russian conflict with China and that the Russians were ~~think~~ looking for wide expanses of territory which might be useful in a future conflict with the 'hi nose.'

Mr Henley said he did not think this was a major reason for the Russian policy in the Middle East but he added Quote Maybe , I don't know " .

More

Maariv Tel Aviv from finklestone London for Zak Denis Healey

I asked Mr Healey to enlarge on his statement that in case of war the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean could be destroyed within minutes by the ~~Nato~~ ~~Nato~~ Powers. Did he have in mind the use of nuclear power? I asked

The Defence Secretary ~~xxx~~ replied quote I am not thinking of nuclear power. The Russian fleet would be very vulnerable without the use of nuclear forces unquote In purely military terms, I asked Mr Healey, what are the British Government's estimates of the present strength of the Israeli forces and the Arab forces and did the British experts foresee a period when the Arab forces could be equal to the Israelis?

To this Mr Healey replied quote I see no military threat for Israeli survival now or within the next few years. Anybody knows it takes a long time to turn the delivery of new equipment into the creation of an effective military force unquote

I reminded Mr Healey that he had said that, unlike other Powers (and by this he meant France under de Gaulle) Britain would fulfill her arms contracts to Israel. What about the ^{Chieftains} and what about future contracts and would Libya still get Chieftains while Israel did not?

Mr Healey, as he had warned me earlier, left ~~many~~ these ~~xxxxx~~ questions unanswered, except to say quickly Quote We have fulfilled the contracts ~~xxx~~ unquote He went on to say that the British military sales were intended to maintain a military balance in the area. He would not accept ^{my} argument that it was essential for peace that the military balance should be ^{EVEN} slightly in favour of the Israelis for if the balance was absolutely equal the Arabs with their ^{OVER} optimistic and self-deluding temperament might be tempted to launch a full scale attack. Quote No & I do not accept that unquote he said. I pointed out to Mr Healey that when British interests in the Middle East were considered they were always seen in economic terms - oil and investments, favouring the Arabs. But was it not a matter of importance that the Western World could in the event of a war with Russia have a friendly power like Israel on their side?

The Defence Secretary refused to answer and then said with a loud laugh Quote I am not sure you would like it if I did answer unquote The supreme British interest in the Middle East, he added, was achieving a lasting ~~xxxx~~ peace between Jew and Arab, and this outweighed strategic ~~xxx~~ advantages or ~~disadvantages~~. The important thing is to ensure the Middle East ~~xxx~~ conflict did not lead to war between the great Powers.

When I asked Mr Healey what were the British estimates of the Israeli capacity to produce an atom bomb? And might a time arrive when there was a ~~stalemate~~ stalemate of nuclear terror in the Middle East just as it existed now between the Russians and the Americans?

~~xxxxxxx~~ Mr Healey refused to comment about the atom bomb and Israel. He commented however that the introduction of nuclear equipment into the Middle East would be ~~dangerous~~ dangerous to peace and dangerous to the survival of the countries within the area. Quote I do not think the analogy of the nuclear position between the Soviet Government and the USA is necessarily relevant to relations between all countries in the world

Marriv Telaviv from finklestone London for Zak Denis Healey

I returned again to the question of the balance of power in the Middle East, pointing out that by refusing the Chieftain tanks to Israel Britain had clearly taken the view that the ~~present~~ existing balance of power was the right one. But in view of the increasing Russian participation on the Egyptian side was not the balance changing in the Egyptian favour and if he saw it changing would he not personally favour so- ing that Israel received the arms she needed ?

But Mr Healey made it clear that in his view ~~that~~ there was no information suggesting without doubt that a change in the ~~p~~ balance of power in the Middle East was taking place to the ~~disadvantage~~ disadvantage of Israel .

[One of ~~my~~ my last questions ~~was~~ was : Is there an actual commitment by the British Government as stated by Mr Paul Johnson, editor of the New Statesman, that in the final resort Britain would interfere to stop ~~the~~ the destruction of Israel ?
? Brit, in's Defence Secretary replied: 'This ~~is~~ is British policy.' This had been made clear by Mr George Thomson, the Minister of State at the Foreign Office, when he visited Israel . I pressed ~~him~~ ^{MR HEALEY} to clarify this statement but he replied Quote I cannot enlarge on that unquote

[Nevertheless this is the first time that a Cabinet Minister has specifically confirmed Mr Paul Johnson 's historic statement.]

Ends

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From : P T E ENGLAND,



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Main Building, Whitehall, LONDON S.W.1
Telephone: 01-930 7022, ext. 6599

78

Our reference: AUS (D. Staff)/66
Your reference:

4 May 1970

Dfi submitted.

R.E.

RECEIVED IN REGISTRY No. 10 - 7 MAY 1970 <i>NER 3/548/1</i>
--

John Arthur

Mr Evans.

Pl. do this.

2 W. M. Evans

5/8.

4.5

SECRETARY OF STATE'S INTERVIEW WITH MR. JOSEPH FINKLESTONE

B. G. Evans
K. P. A.
10.00 am
6.3

In your absence last Friday I telephoned Mr. Hayman to let him know that our Secretary of State was due to see Mr. Finklestone that afternoon. Your News department was, of course, already aware of the forthcoming interview.

2. I now attach a copy of the transcript of the interview worked up by Mr. Finklestone into the draft of his article for his paper, "Maariv". Our Secretary of State has asked that the draft should be carefully checked both by ourselves and by the FCO, and that we should have no hesitation in cutting the article about if we think that necessary.

3. We ought to go back to Mr. Finklestone by Wednesday of this week. Would you please let me have by then your comments on the article in the form of proposed alterations and deletions.

Yours sincerely,

Peter England.

P.S. Can you throw any light please on the remark attributed to Mr George Thomson at X on the last page?

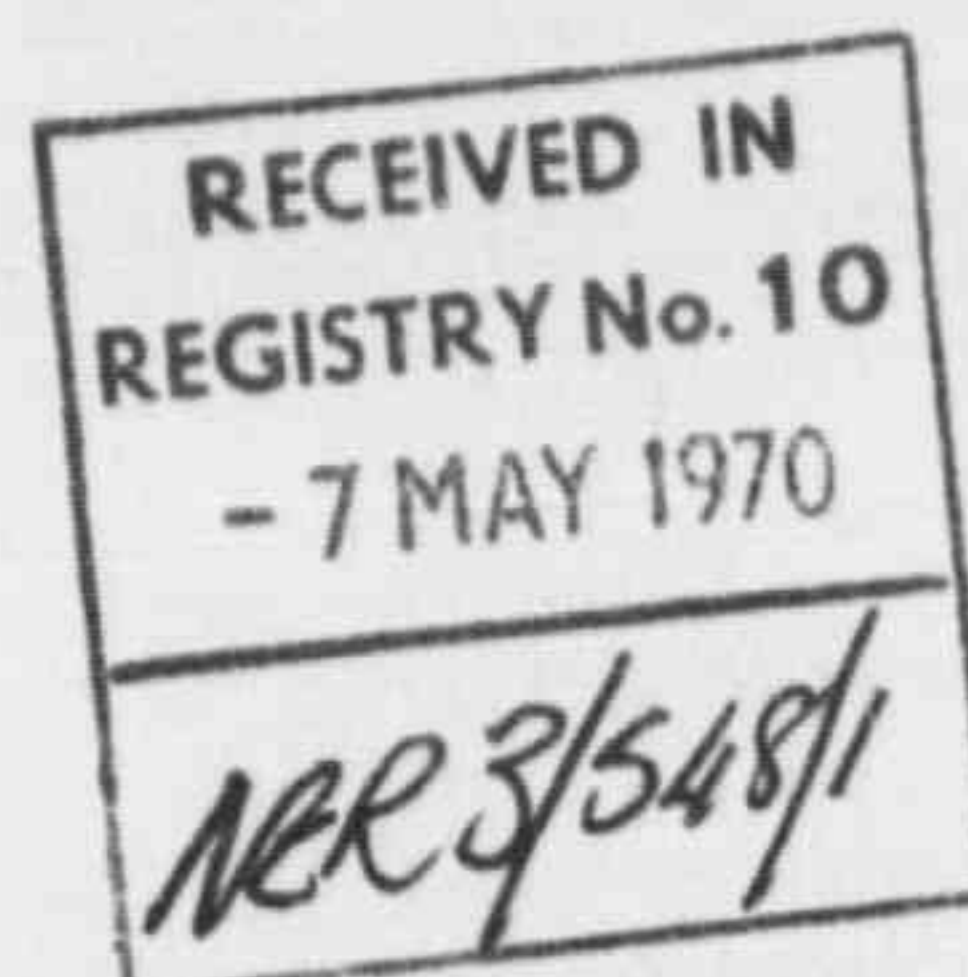
G G Arthur, Esq, CMG,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London, SW.1.

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76

Mr. Hayman



Mr. Healey's interview with Mr. Finklestone
on 1 May

...

I submit a self explanatory draft reply to Mr. England's letter to Mr. Arthur of 4 May.

J. P. Tripp
(J. P. Tripp),
Near Eastern Department.
5 May, 1970.

*Europe
from 6/5*

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To:—

P. T. E. England Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

From

Mr. Hayman
Telephone No. & Ext.

Department

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.....In Confidence

As Geoffrey Arthur is away, I am answering your letter AUS(D. Staff)/66 of 4 May about the interview which Mr. Healey had with Mr. Finklestone of "Maariv" on 1 May.

We have had a careful look at the transcript which you enclosed with your letter. We think it important that four passages should be deleted. They are those we have sidelined and placed in square brackets on pages 1, 3 and 5 of the transcript.

We think it particularly important that the first and fourth of these passages should not be published. There is no British commitment, overt or secret, to go to the military assistance of Israel. Mr. George Thomson said nothing to imply that any such commitment existed when he visited Israel in early November 1969. During the speech which he delivered at the Balfour Day Dinner in Tel Aviv on 1 November (of which the Department have now sent you a text), he expressed our support for Israel in the following terms:—

"We of course support Israel's right to national survival, and not merely that but her right to live as a nation state within secure and recognised borders. As the Foreign

/Secretary

Secretary has said several times, notably in the House of Commons on June 17, we will not agree to do anything which jeopardises Israel's security."

We do not quite understand the meaning of the second passage we have marked. But we think it important to avoid giving the impression in public that we are ready to collaborate with the Israelis in assessing the extent and importance of the Soviet military presence in the U.A.R. We are not happy about the third passage we have marked because it is not true that we have "pleaded with Israeli Ministers to stop the deep raids".

B.H.
6/5/70

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

(LAST PAPER)

Adm 6/5
Mr MacRae
Mr Perkins
Miss Beckett

(Bm)

18/5

6 May, 1970. R.E.

Reg Ennes
KPA.

6/5.

CONFIDENTIAL

As Geoffrey Arthur is away, I am answering your letter AUS(D. Staff)/66 of 4 May about the interview which Mr. Healey had with Mr. Finklestone of "Maariv" on 1 May.

2. We have had a careful look at the transcript which you enclosed with your letter. We think it important that four passages should be deleted. They are those we have sidelined and placed in square brackets on pages 1, 3 and 5 of the transcript.

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"We of course support Israel's right to national survival, and not merely that but her right to live as a nation state within secure and recognised borders. As the Foreign Secretary has said several times, notably in the House of Commons on 17 June, we will not agree to do anything which jeopardises Israel's security."

4. There would be no objection to a reference being made to Mr. Thomson's speech at the Balfour Day Dinner provided that the terms of the statement as set out above are quoted in full.

5. We do not quite understand the meaning of the second passage we have marked. But we think it important to avoid

/giving....

P.T.E. England Esq.,
AUS (D),
Ministry of Defence,
Main Building.

(LAST PAPER)

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• (P.T. Hayman)

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